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## **Bulletin of Latin American Research**

**Book review:** *Facing Poverty and Marginalization – Fifty years of critical research in Brazil* (edited by Michalis Kontopodis, Maria Cecilia Magalhaes and Maria Jose Coracini)

**Dr. Carolina Matos**

At a moment when the imposition of austerity measures in Brazil by the controversial government of Michel Temer is set to penalise the country's poor the most, an edited volume that contains critical research into the everyday experiences of various marginalized social movements and groups in Brazil is more than welcome. Thus the daily routine and everyday practices of various powerless groups in Brazilian society, from isolated "homeless" people, to the landless movement and other indigenous and voiceless youth groups, are the subject of study and attention of various researchers in the new book *Facing Poverty and Marginalization – Fifty years of Critical Research in Brazil*, edited by Michalis Kontopodis, Maria Cecilia Magalhaes and Maria Jose Coracini.

The volume is an interesting and rich collection of essays from various academics who over the last fifty years have engaged in critical research and scholarships which aims to explore the voices of the Brazilian powerless from various methodological and theoretical approaches. The mentally ill, delinquent and other marginalized groups are either examined from the perspectives of Freireian pedagogy to critical sociology as well as discourse analysis. Chapters thus range from the focus on mundane practices to the poetic, mingling instances of individual pain and suffering of those who are obliged to confront poverty and injustice on a daily basis with the enthusiasm of those who engage in collective action and struggle for the rights of other people, forming part of a diversity of marginalized ethnic-social groups.

The eight chapters in the volume thus offer critical examinations of a few of Brazil's most urban and rural social movements, from the landless rural worker's movement to the education of urban workers as well as the national movement for the struggle for housing in the South of the country. The latter article is examined by Comerlato, Stumpf Buaes and Britto Polvora in chapter two of the book ("Struggle for Housing: the November 20 Occupation in Porto Alegre") and is one of the highlights of the edited collection. In a country widely known for its "favelas" or *shantytowns*, seen as symbols of the sharp structural inequalities which exist between the rich and the poor in Brazil, the chapter makes use of Freire's framework of *empowerment* to discuss the *November 20 Occupation* in Porto Alegre. It further contextualises the struggle for better living conditions within a wider quest for social justice, inclusion and equality.

Other chapters emphasise individual suffering and angst in their search for sanity and a place in the world amid the despair of loneliness and material reality of poverty. These individuals find forms of expression in everyday practices which are captured by artistic endeavours (documentary in the first case, and writing in second). This is the case of Amador Mascia's "Life at the Landfill: portraying exclusion and resistance in the documentary Estamira by Marcos Prado" and Yoko Uyeno's "In-Famous Cyberhomelessness: the "homeless" writer Tiao Nicomedes". Another set of chapters examine schooling and the educational practices of various social movements in their search for integration and participation in Brazilian social and political life, including Camini and Kontopodis' "Educating in Itinerancy: Countryside life and novel forms of schooling" and Rodrigues Mendes' "Indigenous Children and Identity Politics: numeracy practices among the Kaibi from Xingu, Mato Grosso". The former chapter engages in a detailed examination of the setting up of schools in the *encampamentos* of one of the most radical movements of Latin America, the landless rural workers, composed of 1.5 million landless members of various ethnic-racial groups.

The introduction to the book, written by Kontopodis, Camargo Magalhaes and Coracini, is also a must read in the edited collection. It situates historically the emergence and development of Brazil's social movements, from student associations to worker's unions, pinpointing how these started to gain space in the context of the struggle for social justice under the government of the deposed then president Joao Goulart, by the military coup in the mid-1960s. As the authors note, this coincided with the start of Brazil's critical theory research. In the context of the turbulent socio-economic and political scenario faced in the country in the last three years, this volume could have done with important additions that could help shed more light into the current challenges faced by these social movements, thus containing empirical studies and theoretical discussions of case studies, such as the 2016 state school student protests against cuts in public education funding and the various feminist mobilizations and protests held throughout the year of 2015, known informally as the Brazilian version of the "Arab spring". *Facing Poverty and Marginalization* nonetheless is an essential collection of top critical research and scholarship on poverty, social justice and social movements in Brazil, and which deserves to be widely read and discussed by academics, students and others interested in issues of inequality, development and democracy in Latin America.